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Request to Remove Inaccurate Content about Hindu Women

Please put this request of mine, below, through to the Instructional Quality Commission. Thank you for your help.

To: Instructional Quality Commission  
c/o Thomas Adams, Executive Director  
1430 N Street, Suite 3207  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Respected Members of Instructional Quality Commission,

I write to you make you aware of the incorrect and insulting text in the section of California's sixth grade textbooks dedicated to Hinduism. I'm a 15 year old high school student, and a feminist, as well as a proud Hindu. While I don't remember much from my 6<sup>th</sup> grade social studies lessons, I do remember sitting with my fellow Hindu classmates and laughing at the inaccuracies in the lesson. In retrospect, I should've noticed that it wasn't fair. But now I am not only extremely aware, but extremely confused as to why out of all the religions represented in the textbook, the religion that I practice was the most mislabeled and misrepresented.

It seems only appropriate to begin with a quote from the 6th grade textbook. It states, "Hinduism also taught that women were inferior to men. As a result, Hindu women were not allowed to read the Vedas or other sacred texts." So now let's debunk this lie - which is the oldest known surviving text in the world? It is possibly the ancient Hindu text - the Rig Veda. And while the 6th grade textbook says Hindu women were not allowed to read the Vedas, the Vedas themselves have record of 30 female sages, known as Rishikas, as authors of the Rig Veda. These Rishikas are probably the earliest known female poets in the world. A fact that any feminist, Hindu or otherwise, would be proud of.

This is not an isolated case in Hindu history. For example, a female sage named Gargi debated the famous Sage Yagnavalakya in the court of King Janaka. She was given the title 'Brahmavadini', the beholder of supreme knowledge, and was the one who at the end of the debate certified that the famous Rishi had enough spiritual knowledge.

Women have been in roles of leadership in Hinduism, probably more than any other religion that we know of today. There aren't many religions that give women authority over scriptures, or positions of religious leadership. Then why is Hinduism being presented so negatively?

I attended the public hearing of Instructional Quality Commission on October 8th and put forward this point but was told that the new draft of the framework took care of all stereotypes. But when I went through the draft of the framework, I saw that this wasn't the case. I saw my heritage being labelled as "patriarchy" on line number 883. This statement is unfairly singling us out, even though many ancient civilizations were "patriarchal", as the textbooks put it. It also completely devalues the previous facts stated about Hindu women and their important positions in society.

I urge you to make amends, by removing the word 'patriarchy' when describing my heritage, and mention these pertinent facts about Hindu women in the textbooks, to set the record straight, and provide accurate representation for us Hindus.

Regards,  
Shivangi Singh